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*The C A S E of the Fishmongers in  
and about the City of London, as  
to the Bill brought in Parliament by  
some Fishermen, concerning Bil-  
linggate Market, &c.*

**T**H E *Fishmongers*, in and about the City of *London*, are Members of an Ancient Company within the same City, and are not Ingrossers; though by the Statute of the 5th and 6th *Edward VI.* they may buy to sell again by Retail. They are not Foretallers; but buy in Common and Publick Markets, and Places allowed by Law. That the *Horsly-down* and *Harmich* Fishermen, the great Promoters of the now Bill, formerly were content to bring to Market what Fish they caught themselves, but of late have set up a new way of Dealing, and buy Fish caught by others, and oftentimes that which is Unseasonable and Unsizable, not fit to be sold; and yet by their Grosiers and Fisherwomen, who are under no Regulation or Government, do put it off.

The *Lowestoft* Men, who Petition in favour of the Bill, are set on by the rest, and falsely tax the *Fishmongers* with bringing Fish from *Scotland*, but guilty of it themselves; and are, together with their Confederates, the occasion of the dearness of *Herrings*, and want to be selling *Cod* by couples and weight, that they may sell the Corrupt and Sound together.

The *Fishmongers*, who are Traders in Fish, are at great Charges, and run great Hazards in sending out Vessels to Sea, for catching and bringing Fish to *London* for furnishing the Court, the Nobility and City; and cause great Quantities of Fish to be brought on Horseback to *London*, out of Publick remote Markets in this Kingdom, or otherwise the Markets here could not be supplied with Fish: For by reason of the uncertainty of the Wind and Weather, the Vessels are oftentimes obstructed, and the Fish from the Sea Coasts spoiled; whereas by the Contrivance of the *Fishmongers*, Fish is brought hither from *Rye*, *Hastings*, *Foulstone*, and other Places on the Sea Coasts, on Horseback in Twelve or Fifteen Hours, which in Vessels can't be here under Eight and Forty Hours, or a longer time.

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The buying of Fish at the remote Markets, and bringing the same to *London*, is, and hath been, a very great Incouragement to the Breeding of Seamen in the Sea-Port Towns, and is a Supply far beyond what the *Horsly-down* and *Harwich* Fishermen do, or can, perform.

The Bill suggests, That the *Fishmongers* will not permit the Fish-women to buy Fish of the Fishermen. The Truth is, there are a sort of Women who are termed *Grosiers* at *Billingsgate*, and others, who take upon them to forestall, and ingross much of the Fish as it is brought to *Billingsgate* Market, which they sell again in the same Market to Retailers, who many of them likewise sell the same again in the said Market; so that no Citizen, or *Fishmonger*, can buy any Fish in the Market but from them at the second, and sometimes at the third Hand, by which the Price is much enhanced, and the said Women have been Presented by the Grand Jury in *London* for such Doings.

The *Fishmongers* are the great Importers of Fish, and Supporters of the Fishery, and have and do incourage the bringing in of Fish to the Markets; and are under Rules and Orders to make shew thereof openly, that the Quantities may be seen, and that the same may be distributed in all Markets and Places for lessening the Prices; and are punishable if they offer any Unsizable, Unseasonable or Corrupt Fish to be sold; there being Officers appointed to walk in the Fish-Markets, and view the Shops, for that purpose to observe and inform against them: And the *Horsly-down* and *Harwich* Fishermen are under no Regulation, but frequently keep their Boats below at *Gravesend*, and feed the Markets by little and little, as they please. And some Fishermen, by their unlawful Engines, have near ruined the Fishing Grounds where they have used to fish.

*Note.* As to the Salt-Fish Trade, if the *Fishmongers* did not buy Quantities of Fish, and keep them as a Store, the City and Country could not be supplied with Fish in the Winter time, nor the Ships furnished with Fish to set out to Sea.

The Lord Mayor of *London* hath Officers attending at *Billingsgate*, who are called *Teomen of the Waterside*, and are to ring a Bell at the opening of the Market at *Billingsgate*, which hath always been an Open and Free Market, to begin from *Lady-day* to *Michaelmas* at Four of the Clock in the Morning, and from *Michaelmas* to our *Lady-day* at Six of the Clock, and to continue till Eight of the Clock in the Morning. And none have been more desirous than the *Fishmongers*, for the due and regular ordering of the Market there, and the Officers doing their Duty therein; so that there is no need to make *Billingsgate* a Free Market, it being so already.

The *Fishmongers* of *London* dwell in the Publick Streets and Markets, and have borne all Offices, and paid all Publick Taxes and Charges to the Government.

And observe, That the Employment of buying Fish after the Citizens and Traders were supplied, was heretofore used by Honest Ancient Women, appointed thereunto out of every Ward within the City,



City : But by the Bill now depending, all Persons may buy and sell again in any other Market or Place, except in Houses and fixed Shops, which the *Fishmongers* have. Therefore the Bill seems designed wholly to exclude them from their Trades, except they will sell in the Streets, with the other Persons that live in very obscure Habitations.

The *Fishmongers* do not oppose honest Laborious Womens buying Fish after the Citizens, Purveyors and Traders who live in and about the City are furnished according to the Custom. But hope such Women as are now commonly called *Fish women*, and are the first Buyers, they shall not be encouraged, being a rude and disorderly people under no Government. And the said *Horsley Down* and *Harwich Fisher-men* buying the Fish from others, and deceitfully supplying the Markets with part, and keeping back the rest, the Price of Fish is enhanced. And the other *Fisher-men* that have a Trade more remote than the *Horsley Down* and *Harwich men* will be discouraged and ruined, and the *Fishmongers* injured in their lawful Trade and Employment. And the Breed of Seamen in a great measure prevented.

The Statute made in the Fifth and Sixth of *Edward VI.* against Forefallers, Regrators and Ingrossers, which hath ever since the making thereof been found beneficial for the Kingdom, being the Experience and Conclusion of all the former Statutes made in such behalf, will be by this Bill wholly set aside, made void, and of none Effect.

Those who underhand promote this Bill, have in several preceding Parliaments attempted to get Bills pass'd for to serve their Ends, but hitherto without Success, 'tis hoped they will meet with no better now, since the *Fishmongers* doubt not but to make it Appear that these Men intend a private and unjust Gain, and no Publick Good. And that the innovation now attempted will be injurious to the Kingdom in General, particularly to the City of *London*, and unto the *Fishmongers*, who humbly take leave to say that they have during the whole War been Useful and Serviceable to the Government by providing Stores of Fish, at their Great Expence and Hazard.



THE  
C A S E

OF THE

**Fishmongers,**

*In Relation to the Bill Con-  
cerning*

**Billingsgate-Market.**

